

**Devils Lake Planning Commission**  
**6-2-16**

Members present: Larry Liere, Tom Traynor, Ray Sletteland, Rodger Haugen, Dick Johnson, Gary Martinson, Terry Thompson, Mike Grafsgaard.

Other present: Steven Zimmer. See attached sign up sheet.

Larry opened the public hearing to review a request for a conditional use permit to construct a helicopter hangar on the north side of St Alexius (Mercy) Hospital, which is zoned as residential heavy density. They are requesting to build a 66' X 100', 2 story hangar with a heli-pad.

Gary said we haven't seen this type of request before and are not sure if this is a use that fits the zoning in that area. The use is medically related and a clinic and hospital are conditional uses in this zoning. The request is being brought to the planning commission by means of a public hearing to see if it meets the criteria of a conditional use. He said he didn't get the request to the city's planning consultant prior to scheduling the planning commission hearing.

Andrew Lankowicz, president of the hospital, said they have leased space for a couple years now for the Valley Med crew to live at the hospital. They are entering into a long term lease with Valley Med and when the lease expires, the hospital would own the hangar. The hospital is in full support of the hangar project.

Kevin Lewis, architect/engineer representative for Valley Med, stated they have followed all the rules and regulations required by the City and is ready to answer any questions there may be.

Jeff Wahl said he moved to 13<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in 2002 and strongly opposes the construction of a hangar and fuel tank. This area was developed as a retirement area and this doesn't fit the area.

Kari Hunt said their house is probably located closest to the proposed hangar. Academy Village is zoned as a PUD to encourage and promote a residential environment and to prohibit commercial and industrial use of the land. Valley Med provides services for several counties and is using the hospital for a base. There are many trips each day. The hangar and fuel tank belong at the airport. An 8000 gallon fuel tank in the neighborhood should scare us with all the homes and the school in the area. We definitely need the service but it should be at the airport.

Wayne Barendt stated his property would be greatly affected by the proposed hangar and is appalled to be even considering a commercial building in a residential area. The service is definitely very good but a hangar doesn't belong in this area which would be literally feet from his backyard. The area is zoned as residential not commercial.

Rick Follman said Devils Lake definitely needs the services of Valley Med but doesn't want a hangar that close to homes, school and bike path. There is a huge safety issue with a fuel tank located that close to homes, the school and bike path. He is not opposed to a building for the helicopter but this has expanded from a small building to a commercial building and that he is opposed to.

Chris Dumont stated he lives a few blocks from the proposed hangar and his children go to school at St Joseph's. First, he thanks Valley Med for their service and the lives they have saved. Second, he

asked if FAA regulations are met for the landing and approach area. He is also concerned about the noise factor for the school. Currently they have to stop classes when the helicopter lands.

Rick Morse, RT at the hospital, said the point of the helicopter being based at the hospital is to save time. It would be defeating the purpose somewhat by locating it at the airport and taking more time to get to the hospital.

Jim Moe, fire chief, said he didn't see any barriers on the plans for the fuel tank and wasn't provided much information to review.

Mike asked what difference it makes to the service if it is located at the hospital versus the airport.

Kevin Lewis said when there is a call, they would have to go get the helicopter and come to the hospital to get the crew. If it's located on site, it would cut trips by 50%. Both flight and medical staff would stay in the hangar.

Dick expressed concern about the building being located near school and residential areas. He felt it would work well at the airport and both flight and medical staff could stay at the airport.

Rick Follman is not concerned as much about the number of landings as he is with the construction of a huge hangar. He asked if this use is for the Devils Lake helicopter or as a regional center.

Kevin Lewis said it is not intended as a regional base. This proposal is actually smaller than most hangars. No major maintenance on the helicopter would be done on the site.

Andrew Lankowicz stated that he is afraid that if the hangar and landing pad are not located at the hospital, it won't go to the airport and we will lose the service. We would also lose the taxes generated by a \$3 million project.

Kari Hunt asked if anyone else would like to have that type of building in their back yard. That would decrease the property value when you try to sell a house with a hangar and fuel tank in the back yard.

Rick Follman said if their true mission is to help the community, they will do it no matter where the hangar is located.

Larry noted that the public hearing for the hangar and the public hearing for a conditional use permit for an 8000 gallon above ground fuel tank for the proposed hangar ended up being discussed as one public hearing.

Larry closed the public hearing and opened the regular meeting. Ray made a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rodger. Carried.

Steven stated that from a purely planning standpoint, he doesn't believe the use they are applying for is covered by the zoning ordinance for residential high density. He said this public hearing is for informational purposes only. The way the zoning ordinance reads, this use is not possible. A hangar is more of an industrial use and should be steered to that type of zoning. He said there may be two possible options: 1) apply to have the zoning ordinance amended to allow this type of use, or re-zone

as a PUD district. He also said he looked at other communities that have medical flights and didn't find another city with a stand alone hangar in a residential area.

Steven stated that in his professional opinion, the use of a hangar does not fit this area as a conditional use permit.

Larry asked how the set up was at the new hospital in Fargo and Steven told him the hangar is part of the main hospital building.

Steven said he didn't believe there should even be an application considered and it should be taken off the table. The applicants could come back if they want to pursue a change in the zoning ordinance.

Rodger made a motion to recommend denying the application for a conditional use permit to construct a helicopter hangar on the north side of St Alexius (Mercy) Hospital which is zoned as residential high density. Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Terry. Carried.

Andrew Lankowicz will consult with his superiors to see what they wish to do next.

Ray asked if the hangar were built at the airport, would they be allowed to have living quarters in the hangar.

Rodger didn't believe they would, but thought the ordinance could be changed to allow that.

Dick stated there are much better options for this type of use at the airport instead because the fuel is already there. He asked not to hold the community hostage and work for what's best for the whole community.

Andrew Lankowicz asked about clarification on whether or not the existing operation stays the same. Will the air operations in and out of the hospital still be in compliance?

Ray made a motion to recommend the City Commission approve the continuance of the existing medical flight operations at St Alexius (Mercy) Hospital. Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rodger. Carried.

Dick made a motion to recommend the City Commission deny the application for a conditional use permit to place an above ground fuel tank at the proposed hangar site on the north side of St Alexius (Mercy) Hospital. Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Rodger. Carried.

Rodger made a motion to reappoint Terry and Greg as members of the Planning Commission. Motion 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ray. Carried.

Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Carlson  
Recording Secretary